

# Past, present and future

## A retrospective, printmaking and up-and-coming artists

**By Richard P. Christenson**  
Deseret News visual arts writer

● The hundreds of guests who attended the opening reception of Avarad Fairbanks' retrospective exhibition on Jan. 16 praised the show. And for good reason: it is one of the finest retrospectives ever held in Salt Lake.

The SLAC's Main Gallery was filled with a cross-section of Fairbanks' works. And the lighting and placement added dramatically to the impact.

And the show is also instructive. In one corner of the Main Gallery, Fairbanks' sculpture studio has been recreated. Here, gallerygoers can learn about marble sculpture techniques.

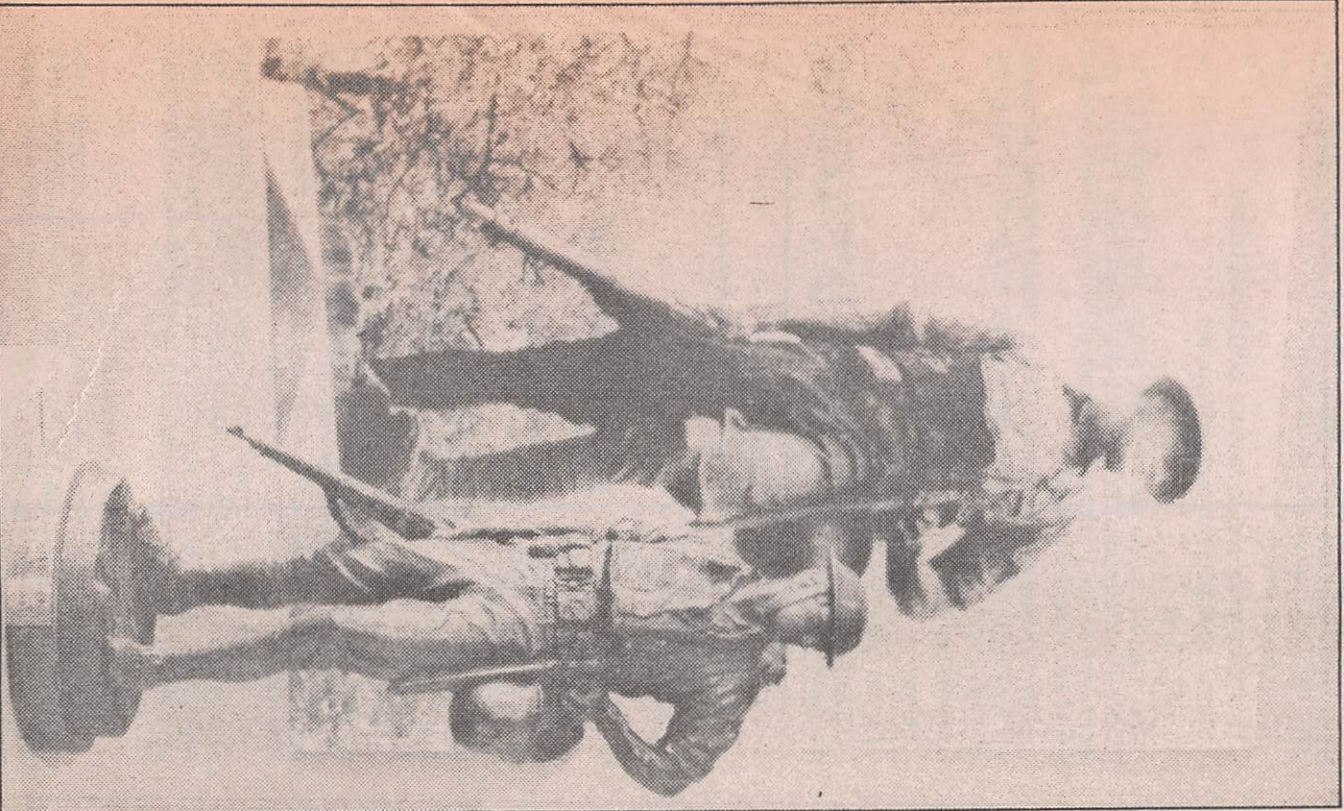
The opening of the show had everything — with one exception. Unfortunately, Fairbanks, who would have celebrated his 90th birthday in March, passed away early on New Year's day.

But although he wasn't there in person, his presence could definitely be felt — in his work, in his studio and, of course, in the video where Fairbanks both talked and sculpted.

Fairbanks was sculpting long before most of us were born. In fact, he created sculpture for almost 80 years. But it isn't the quantity of his works that impress us; it's the quality. This retrospective succeeds in dipping into each decade and extracting some of the sculptor's finest work.

One of his early sculptures, "Idaho Doughboy" (now the "Victorious American Doughboy") is on display. Of course, this is small bronze sculpture compared to the heroic-sized ones found in Moscow and St. Anthony, Idaho.

Also on exhibit are sculptures of prominent government and religious leaders such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Joseph Smith. Fairbanks had an uncanny ability to capture the likeness of these individ-





# Van Gogh

— A news clipping recounting the details of Van Gogh cutting his ear, concluding, "Informed of this act, which could only have been that of a poor deranged person, the police went the next morning to his house, and found him lying in his bed, giving almost no sign of life. The unfortunate man was immediately admitted to the asylum."

— A petition and investigation report from the City of Arles vs. Van Gogh. Couched in universal bureaucratic language understood the world over, it recommends committing Van Gogh. The actual admission records of the asylum at Saint Remy are also reprinted.

— An assessment by Johan De Meester, Dutch critic and admirer of Van Gogh, written after Van Gogh's suicide, "The work that he left behind has now been gathered in a room, and now and then something from there is sent to the unpopular exhibitions of 'the younger generation,' but people hear nothing more about it. Nor is it even likely that people will ever hear much about the art of Vincent Van Gogh. Why should the Luxembourg or the Louvre, why should the Museum in Amsterdam, choose to extend its hospitality to this work? All the paintings are so original, so glaring, so harsh in coloring, and so few are finished . . . Yet there is more talent in them than in many a piece that has obtained a prominent place in the aforementioned collections."

The irony, of course, is that museums are lucky to be able to afford a Van Gogh today. Few can.

The book is full of these insights, yet it at times seems incomplete. Because it doesn't attempt to be a full biography, significant areas of Van Gogh's life aren't touched upon — either because he never wrote about them or they didn't end up recorded elsewhere. An excellent chronology and a fine introduction do help set the events in perspective, but the reader often wishes for more information. So, too, with the beautifully printed color illustrations which would benefit

# Poet William Stafford's a hard man to keep up with

Not long ago *Writer's Digest* sent a questionnaire to 6,000 American poets. Like the wicked witch looking into her mirror, the magazine asked "Who's the fairest poet in the land?"

The word came back.

The most popular poet in America is William Stafford.

William Stafford, a soft-spoken Westerner.

Good for him.

Poet John Berryman used to tease people about belonging to The PFRF ("The Professional Friends of Robert Frost"). I'm a card carrying member of The Professional Friends of William Stafford. And I'm tickled he's regarded so highly.

Stafford's response to the *Writer's Digest* "beauty contest," of course, was typical. He said he was popular because he'd been around a long time and he'd written a lot.

And William Stafford *has* written a lot.

I know.

I try to collect his work.

Collecting the poetry of William Stafford is a little like raking leaves; you just get a nice pile going and the lawn gets covered with more.

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## CRITIC'S JOURNAL

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By Jerry Johnston

Deseret News literary critic

William Stafford is the Johnny Appleseed of American poetry. Everywhere he goes he sows a new collection of poems. His work shows up everywhere.

Getting copies of Stafford's standard Harper & Row releases is no problem. I picked up a first edition of "Traveling Through the Dark" for a reasonable price from a New York bookstore, and I lucked into a nice copy of "The Rescued Year" at Serendipity Books in San Francisco. (The book Carolyn Kizer gave her daughter, in fact.)

But it's the dozens of little, letter-press, limited editions Stafford publishes that drive a collector batty. I have a friend, Ivan Hildt, who raises raspberries. He says new raspberries seem to ripen behind him as he picks a row. He could go on picking raspberries forever. He feels a bit overwhelmed.

Stafford's output of poems overwhelms me.

I've heard the man writes a poem a day, has written something like 5,000 publishable poems and has large boxes of unpublished work in his attic. And as his reputation grows, so does the asking price for collections of his poetry.